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# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS.

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JANUARY, 1895.

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## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RECENT LABOR TROUBLES IN AMERICA.

ALL matters which affect men in their relations to each other and to the community in which they live come within the realm of ethical consideration. In these later times all great matters are being brought to the ethical standard of judgment. Political economy has undergone almost a revolution in the changes which have been brought into it from the stand-point of ethics. That grand department of human knowledge which relates to the accumulation and distribution of wealth and the body of facts relating to it, which has been designated "political economy," has not been adequate to the full consideration of the various phases of business life. The recognition of the power of moral forces in all that pertains to the accumulation and the distribution of wealth is recent, and with three or four exceptions (and the exceptions will come readily to the mind of any man familiar with economics), the writers of this country, as well as those of England and the Continent, are shaping their views to take on the higher thought, stimulated by ethics. Dogmatic theology is giving way before the power of moral considerations; politics looks to the law of right living, of right dealing in the institution of the statutes of advanced nations and states; the politician who is simply seeking personal advantage must, as the years

go by, more and more consider the welfare of the commonwealth, and in this consideration he must judge of the actions of men in their mutual relations. The judgment of business men on the characters of their associates rests entirely upon an estimate of their downright moral elements or qualities. Even the most active stock gambler must make his word good when he agrees to lay on the desk of a business associate at a certain hour certain securities, checks or bonds, or leave the field. Notwithstanding all that we hear of political corruption, of business looseness, of defalcations, of newspaper recklessness, of church degeneration, the ethical standard of life is growing higher and higher and the moral conduct of men in all relations more in accord with the precepts of the highest principles of action; and it is upon the ethical basis that we ought to consider the influence and the significance of the great labor controversies which prevail at the present time. Economic principles alone will not suffice for the student who cares to look deeply into the industrial affairs of a state and the results which come of their active prosecution. The business relations of labor and capital can be judged by purely economic standards. The relation of labor and capital as joint forces in relation to all the forces of society can only be judged properly by a philosophical application of the highest ethical rules. If society depends for its maintenance, its development, and its purity upon industry, as I believe it does, there must be connecting lines which ought to bring all the industrial relations into accord, that the highest product may be realized and the highest social development secured. In this view, what is the significance of our recent great labor wars? During the brief period of seven months, ending with June, 1894, four controversies, each of vast proportions, occurred in the United States,—the Lehigh Valley strike, in December, 1893; the American Railway Union strike on the Great Northern, which occurred in April, 1894; the great coal strike, which occurred the same month, and the Chicago strike of June and July.

The strike of the Lehigh Valley Railroad employees embraced all classes and extended over the entire line, the inter-

ests of the people of three States being affected, much property destroyed, and the public seriously discommoded. The trouble was ended by the united efforts of the Boards of Arbitration of New Jersey and New York, the action being brought to conclusive results on the invitation of the New Jersey board to that of New York to co-operate with it in the endeavor to effect a settlement.

The Great Northern strike brought under its conditions a very large percentage of the employees of the Great Northern Railway, causing for eighteen days the almost entire suspension of business on forty-five hundred miles of road. This strike ended May 1, as the result of the decision of a board of arbitration, to which the parties involved voluntarily submitted their affairs. The commercial bodies of St. Paul and Minnesota induced the leaders of the strike to submit their grievances to arbitration, and in a few hours the wage question was brought to an amicable adjustment through compromise on the part of the company and the men. The contention was over a wage scale. The president of the railroad was in favor of arbitrating the differences between the road and the men from the opening of the difficulty, and the striking employees finally accepted that method of settlement.

The third great strike within the period named was that of the bituminous coal-miners of twelve States and Territories. Probably over one hundred and thirty thousand men were affected by this strike. It occurred April 21, and was carried on under the auspices of the United Mine Workers of America. The contention was over wages, and the original intention was to secure a general movement in every State and Territory in the United States, that every mine should cease work on April 21, and that no mine in any State, regardless of whether the demand in any particular region was granted, should resume under any circumstances until every mine in every State and Territory involved secured what was demanded, when all were to resume work at the same time in all parts of the country. This gave the contest, in some of its features, the characteristics of a sympathetic strike, for any operator who was willing to pay the price demanded in his particular region

was not to be permitted to resume operations or his men to accept the price demanded unless every other operator and all the mines in every other State had a settlement at the same time.

The fourth great contest was that inaugurated by the American Railway Union—the organization which opened the strike on the Great Northern about the middle of April—against the railways of the West, in order to compel them to take such action as would protect the striking employees of Pullman's Palace Car Company. The contest was a combination of the boycott and strike. It was purely sympathetic, the origin of the trouble being the strike which occurred at the town of Pullman among the employees of the Pullman Company on account of the reduction of wages. Many of these employees had joined the American Railway Union. They struck May 11, last, and were out when the American Railway Union held its regular convention in Chicago, commencing June 12. The affairs of the Pullman employees were brought before the convention, and in order to help them, as has been stated, the great sympathetic strike and boycott of the latter part of June was ordered.

The material features of these contests are too well known to necessitate their rehearsal here, but their significance in various directions is a matter which needs thorough discussion, wise deliberation, and the consideration of all thoughtful, patriotic men; for it must be conceded that the public has rights in these matters which must be respected, and if these rights are not respected the public must see to it that it be obeyed.

It is interesting to note that all contests, whether of one kind or another, beyond the mere fights of brutes, are for principle, each party claiming that it is standing for a vital principle and insisting that on that account it will not yield. It may be said that there cannot be two vital principles of antagonistic nature, and yet wise men, intelligent men, men who love their country, who prefer peace to discord, who prefer prosperity to adversity, will insist that a principle is at stake and that they are fighting for it. This is true in all labor

contests, it is true in all national contests, it is true in all individual contests. Lawsuits could not exist if each party did not feel that he was standing for a principle, vital to him and his interests, and yet each knows perfectly well that with the decision of the court his principle may go for naught. In the recent labor contests no exceptions occurred in this matter. Each party believed, and honestly, we must concede, that it was conducting a fight for a principle dear to it, and which it deemed essential to its success and happiness. The labor question, concretely stated, means the struggle for a higher standard of living. A strike is a vigorous protest against any condition existing or which may exist interfering with the higher standard. So it is a matter of principle with the leaders of a strike that nothing shall be countenanced which will in any way lead to a lower standard of life or which shall infringe upon the life-line of wages. The strike is an assertion that inconvenience, suffering, deprivation, hunger will be endured rather than to yield the principle at stake. We need not, in this connection, take into consideration the violence, the rioting, the destruction of property which accompany some great strikes, and which usually lead to the defeat of the original purpose, even when that purpose was for a just cause. These are incidents, as are the characters of the men engaged. The leaders of the strike may be men of undoubted wisdom, or agitators, or unprincipled demagogues, or loud-mouthed blatherskites ; the personal equation only aggravates the matter in the public estimation, but does not affect the ethics of the case. On the other hand, the employer, who may be honest or dishonest, arbitrary or generous, feels that he has a right to manage his own business in his own way, and that he knows better than any one else what he can pay for wages ; he knows that as competition grows fiercer and fiercer, as the processes of manufacture grow more and more expensive, the capital necessary to conduct his enterprise must be increased, the margin of profits narrowed, the cost of production reduced, and with all this he knows that on the whole the general trend of wages is upward. He knows, therefore, when he says he will not yield to the demands of the striking

party, that a principle vital to the integrity of his business is at stake, and he feels secure in this position and has the sympathy of all men who have been or who may be situated in like manner; and yet, as in the ordinary lawsuit, that which was a vital principle to one of the parties must either be vacated through defeat or else each yield something for the sake of the public welfare. Ordinarily, the fight goes on without much regard to the public, until one or the other is obliged to yield. Take the most recent of our great troubles. It was a tri-party contest, organized first by the employees at Pullman, and had it remained a purely local affair the world would never have heard much of it or cared much about it. The Pullman Company was, as it often declared, contending for a principle, and a principle which all political economists and business men would endorse. The men were contending for a wage, not beyond the life-line, and certainly not up to it, and for certain concessions which they believed vital to their interests, to their welfare, and to their continued ability to work. This strike, I believe, would have been settled then and there had it not been for inopportune circumstances which occurred, and which brought two other parties into the field,—the American Railway Union and the combined railroads radiating from Chicago. A powerful labor organization, on the one hand, took up the fight for the Pullman employees and made it a sympathetic contest. A powerful combination of railroads took up the fight for the Pullman Company on the other side, and made it a sympathetic contest in that respect. Here, then, were three great elements, all-powerful in their way, each contending for a principle, and each equally ready to sacrifice the public, if the sacrifice of the public was essential to the success of the principle it was contending for. Judge Cooley has well stated, in his address before the Bar Association in August last, that it is difficult to deal with a sympathetic strike,—that arbitration cannot come in under such circumstances, because the sympathetic strikers have no grievances which can be arbitrated. If this is true, and I believe it is, what can be done when two great forces are engaged in a sympathetic strike, one on the one hand, and

the other on the other, neither having any particular cause of its own as the basis of the strike? The American Railway Union had no grievances to present to the General Managers' Association, and the General Managers' Association, in its resolutions of June 25, stated that "We learn through the public press that the American Railway Union will declare a boycott on all Pullman palace cars," and that "said boycott is in relation to matters over which we have no control, and in which we have no interest whatever." Yet, notwithstanding this, by the same set of resolutions they declare that they ought to do certain things, and their contention in what they ought to do will not be disputed by right-minded men anywhere; but the point is that it was a sympathetic strike and a sympathetic opposition. There could, therefore, be no adjustment as between the American Railway Union and the General Managers' Association on any points at issue between them as parties. The ethical significance, therefore, in this particular respect reaches deeper than the rights of either party or the principle which either party was maintaining, and reaching farther back, to the original trouble, which was being attacked and defended sympathetically, the significance of the whole controversy points to the conclusion that each owed a duty to the public which neither recognized. This is the chief significance of the four great contests alluded to.

Stubbornness in men is often claimed, by those having it, as a virtue, as a principle. It is difficult sometimes to distinguish between stubbornness and principle, and when such a state of affairs occurs as existed last summer, and the public interests are at stake, the public has a right to determine for itself whether it is stubbornness merely or principle, and to protect itself as against a too stubborn adherence to an assumed principle, which on close examination may prove to be faulty. Too strong words cannot be used in condemning the insane acts of men who, in fighting for what they call a principle, violate all the principles of society and of ethics by destroying the relations of men to each other and to the whole, whether these actions are on the part of the one or of the other party.



Another significant lesson taught by the recent troubles, and especially by the most recent one of them all, lies in the fact that public attention is more emphatically called to the necessity of some sane method of preventing like occurrences, or at least of reducing their number and their severity. The leaders of great strikes are learning as much as the other parties, if not more, and their utterances are encouraging to those who hope to see a better state of affairs. Grand Master Workman Sovereign, of the Knights of Labor, has said that he can imagine that an emergency might arise that would justify a strike, but, generally speaking, nothing more than a temporary victory can possibly be achieved, at the best. He has announced that strikes widen the breach between capital and labor, and that, no matter which side is worsted, it is sore over its defeat, and will retaliate with vengeance at the first opportunity; and he says, further, that it is in study, in education, and in the wise use of the power that is placed in their hands by the ballot that workingmen must hope for release from the condition of which they justly complain. Grand Master Sargent, of the Locomotive Firemen, insists that a man who will encourage men to strike at a time when thousands of his craft are out of employment, when the business of the country is paralyzed, and when men are begging for bread, and when the strike means certain defeat for those who participate in it, displays poor judgment and is unfit to be the leader and counsellor of a labor organization; and he further wisely asserts that when you have a quarrel with one man you cannot make all others suffer. And Mr. Debs, the president of the American Railway Union, an organization that has by its action brought upon itself the severest public condemnation, is reported to have declared recently that the country will see no more great railroad strikes.

In examining the whole situation, as displayed by the Chicago affair, it is quite apparent that its cost was exceedingly small compared to what might have been experienced ultimately had it never taken place. The lesson has been expensive, the losses great, the demoralization certain, the bitterness intensified, and yet out of it all the great moral lesson comes

that there must be found a way to deal with such affairs without the presence of the sheriff and all that the sheriff stands for. This is one of the most significant lessons of the recent troubles. But what significance attaches to them when we undertake to define just how society shall proceed in order to reduce the number and severity of strikes or to prevent them altogether? Can it be hoped that such a condition will prevail or will be secured through any action of the public, either by legislation or otherwise, as shall prevent labor controversies? Is it desirable that they should be entirely prevented, except through the increased intelligence of all parties to them to such an extent that each would recognize the right of the other? It sounds exceedingly weak and of the nature of mere platitude to recommend anything which involves simply right action and a comprehension of the best ethical methods of considering questions. One who has the courage to recommend anything so weak and so in the nature of pious platitude, is not usually considered as comprehending the situation. If, on the other hand, he should be so weak as to recommend something strong, something vigorous, he would be at once condemned, and very properly, too, as being revolutionary. But the men on the side of labor, who organize and carry on strikes, believe in radical measures,—believe that only through radical measures can matters be so adjusted as to leave strikes entirely in the past, or as unused methods for seeking an end; while, on the other hand, business men take the other radical extreme of *laissez faire*, and insist that if labor does not get what it seeks it should lie down and rest content with what may be given it. The one would drive us into state socialism by one method; the other is as rapidly driving us into state socialism by the other method; the basis of contest assumed by either party is dangerous and will not lead to any satisfactory results.

Arbitration, at the best, is a resort to a simple method; yet it is undoubtedly the very best method that can be adopted when a contest is on. Conciliation seeks to avoid the contest, leaving the matter to arbitration if it cannot succeed in bringing people to understand that they owe something to others

rather than all to themselves. I believe one of the most significant results of the recent troubles will be the application, through various offices, voluntary and statutory, of the principles of conciliation and arbitration. These principles are ethical in their bearing; they involve the economic conditions, of course, but the ethical consideration must take higher rank in social and industrial affairs than the economic, and to this end all the work of the intelligent and patriotic men of the country should be aimed, not with any Utopian hope of removing contest entirely, but of paving the way to a better understanding, to clearer conceptions of right and wrong, and to higher conceptions of the deep, underlying ethical principles of the whole matter. In order to succeed in this direction we must lay aside forever some of the heretofore considered axioms of political economy and take into our business life some of the principles of ethics. No matter if they are considered weak by the radical, they must prevail under any system. If the resort is to state socialism, then the higher principles of ethics must prevail. If the resort to state socialism is to be prevented, certainly there must be more peaceful relations, more decent treatment, more mutual consideration; and if these recent troubles signify the dawn of a day or of an era of mutual understanding, of reciprocal relations, of an endeavor to help each other, of the highest altruistic conceptions, as between two great elements, each essential to the other in production in all the business of the world, they have not been in vain. Nothing can be secured by calling hard names. When a man knows for certain what another man will do under specific provocation, and he then deliberately resorts to that provocation, he has no moral right to complain of the result of the action. If one man nags another until he cannot longer forbear and turns upon his persecutor with a blow, and the persecutor then thrashes him, the persecutor is not the hero of the event. But there should be no under-dog in the fight: there should be no fight. There should be a recognition of the absolute necessity of the existence of the other in industrial matters in order to secure success. The builder of an ocean steamship who expends some millions in its con-

struction, cannot move it from the pier until some ordinary man goes into the hold and carries on the laborious work of the stoker, and for the man who has spent his millions in the construction of the magnificent machine to attempt to crush or to own the stoker is a violation of every principle of ethics. The stoker is entitled not only to the very best treatment of the man who owns the machine, but to his sincere regard and respect, and until this principle is recognized, through the claim of the stoker for the respect of the man who has built the ship and the freely accorded claim on his part, there will be no settlement and no adjustment of labor troubles.

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### THE NECESSITY OF DOGMA.\*

I OUGHT perhaps to start with a definition of dogma. But I shall not endeavor, and, indeed, I do not desire or seek to find a very accurate or appropriate one, for I wish to consider an idea which is essentially popular,—I might even say fashionable,—the idea that dogma is not essential to religion nor to our own well-being. In dealing with ideas which are in the air,—which seems equivalent to being in the magazines,—any very great accuracy of definition would be hopeless pedantry. For the purposes of this paper, however, I think we may fairly take dogma as comprising all propositions as to the real nature of things which neither fall within the range of physical and mental science on the one side or of morals on the other. Dogma, as used by the writers whom I wish to consider, depends upon the subject-matter and not on the evidence. The Athanasian Creed and Hegel's Logic are alike dogma. The immortality of the individual or the unreality of matter are dogmas; but the law of gravitation and the duty of honesty are not dogmas, for they deal with experience, and dogmas deal with what is beyond and behind experience, if anything there be which is beyond and behind it.

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\* A lecture delivered before the London Ethical Society.